

MICHAEL R. TURNER

TENTH DISTRICT, OHIO

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE
ON INTELLIGENCE

ASSISTANT MINORITY WHIP



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2019

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Nan Whaley
Mayor of Dayton
103 W 3rd Street
Dayton, OH 45402

Dear Mayor Whaley:

I write to urge caution as you look to plan any counter event on May 25, the same day a hate group from outside our community intends to hold a rally at Montgomery County's Courthouse Square. While we should take every opportunity to unequivocally condemn these hate groups, I am sure you share my view that everyone should be discouraged from being anywhere near Courthouse Square on that day. Our community should not have one eye see or one ear hear this outside group's hateful message.

As you know, during my first term as mayor in March of 1994, while Bill Clinton served as our President, around a dozen Ku Klux Klan members held a rally at Courthouse Square. Upon the advice of Jesse Gooding, the President of the Dayton NAACP, the next day we held a larger ceremonial washing of the Square to reclaim the space and wash away the hate. More than 500 people gathered together to condemn hate and hate groups. The event was accompanied by prayers for the community.

Just a year later, the Dayton Peace Accords put an end to the Bosnian war. We are a community with a legacy of peace and should take every opportunity to embrace that heritage. Let us not risk public safety or give any opportunity for these hate groups to cause violence in our community.

The tragic and fatal events surrounding the rally in Charlottesville should not be forgotten. In Dayton, our past experience teaches us that ignoring the hate group's event and holding a counter event embracing our diversity as a community the next day diminished the attention the hate group sought and kept the community safe. We do not want to give a stronger voice or greater publicity to these vile hate groups.

We should work to bring the entire community together the day after the hate rally for a peaceful symbolic ceremony, as we did in 1994. We know from our past experience that this unifying approach works. I have consulted with Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman, who supports the idea of a next day Courthouse Square washing event and similarly is concerned post-Charlottesville that a same day event could be a target for violence.

For the safety of our community, I again urge caution against organizing any events on the same day as this hate rally. There is a better solution, one that embraces Dayton's history as a beacon of peace and represent who we are as Daytonians. The Dayton region must remain a unified community of peace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael R. Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" being the most prominent part.

Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress